

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND ADVANCING THE STATUS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS



“The United States believes gender equality is critical to our shared goals of prosperity, stability, and peace, and ... investing in women and girls worldwide is critical to advancing U.S. foreign policy.”

– Secretary of State John Kerry

Globally, women and girls are disproportionately affected by poverty and discrimination. Women often end up in insecure, low-wage jobs, and have limited access to the educational resources and financial tools they need to succeed. Women’s leadership and participation in politics, civil society, and the private sector is limited on local, national, and global levels. Adolescent girls in developing countries face particular challenges, including poorer educational outcomes; traditional harmful practices such as early and forced marriage; and higher vulnerability to disease and infections, such as HIV.

Promoting Peace and Ending Gender-based Violence

Women’s perspectives and participation, which are vital to achieving and sustaining peace, are too often overlooked in conflict resolution, prevention, and relief and recovery efforts. Women’s active participation in decision-making processes is critical to sustainable conflict resolution and in turn increases the effectiveness of prevention efforts. Throughout the world, we continue to see risks of gender-based violence increase when disasters or conflicts strike. This type of violence especially impacts women and girls and remains pervasive in both developed and developing countries, in times of both peace and conflict.

Providing Opportunity

There is ample evidence to show when governments and societies afford women and girls the opportunity to lead healthy, safe, and productive lives, greater economic growth and stronger societies emerge.

Diplomacy and Women’s Equality

Under President Barack Obama, Secretary Hillary Clinton and now Secretary John Kerry’s leadership, the United States has brought an unprecedented focus to bear on promoting gender equality and advancing the status of women and girls around the world.

The Department of State, through the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review and the Policy Guidance on Promoting Gender Equality and Advancing the Status of Women and Girls, supports global progress towards gender equality through its diplomatic engagement, foreign assistance programming, and partnerships with civil societies and private sector actors across the globe.

Strengthening U.S. Efforts

Secretary Kerry has directed all U.S. embassies and Department bureaus to continue to prioritize these issues in all of their diplomatic, development, and operations activities, including focusing efforts to:

- **Promote women’s economic and political participation** — by addressing discrimination against women in economic and political spheres, fostering entrepreneurship and leadership, and removing barriers to meaningful engagement and opportunity;
- **Support U.S. strategic initiatives related to gender-based violence and women, peace, and security** — by implementing the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally (2012) and the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (2011);
- **Empower adolescent girls** — by focusing on the specific challenges faced by girls, investing in girls’ education, and countering harmful traditional practices, such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting;
- **Prioritize gender equality in international fora** — by advocating for issues affecting women and girls, including a stand-alone goal on gender equality in the Post-2015 Development Agenda; and
- **Lead by example** — by continuing to promote, fund, and integrate gender equality into programs, policies, and planning in all areas of the State Department.

*For more information on the Office of Global Women’s Issues visit our website: www.state.gov/s/gwi
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